

He may have a face like a human pin cushion, but *Hellraiser's* Pinhead is Japan's number one pin-up after Madonna, and one of the most successful movie monsters of modern times. Martyn Clayden talks to the man behind the mask: mild mannered actor Doug Bradley.

He's the most infamous human porcupine in horror screen history: the Dark Lord of the Underworld with a dry wit and a pitiless heart. And the good news is, he's loving every minute of it.

Meeting Doug Bradley in the flesh is a surprisingly normal experience. Invariably casually dressed, only the remorselessly receding hairline and the laughter lines round his eyes give the game away about his age (which, for the record, is 39). Warm, affable, and gently spoken, his voice is that of a seasoned thespian (look it up), but without the pretension.

In other words, he's about as different from his celluloid alter-ego - the terrifying Pinhead of the *Hellraiser* series - as it is possible to imagine. The monster who growled "We will tear your soul apart" is keener on quietly dissecting a Four Seasons pizza than barbecuing babies (or in the case of *Hellraiser III*, dismembering raving teenagers).

Screenwriter Peter Atkins, though, couldn't imagine anyone else as better suited to the role: "What he brings to the part is gravity, a quiet, understated elegance. As with all good actors, he shows us the man beneath the mask, the humanity beneath the monster. I certainly couldn't imagine Pinhead without Doug, and I don't think the audience could either."

Born in Liverpool,

Bradley teamed up with a number of school chums in the mid-70's to create an experimental theatre group dubbed *The Dog Company*. One of those school friends was a talented young playwright whose plays became a staple diet of the Company's touring programme in the UK, Belgium,

detail later. He was doing then what he's doing now, and working as hard then as he does now. The only difference is he's now being paid obscene amounts of money to do it!

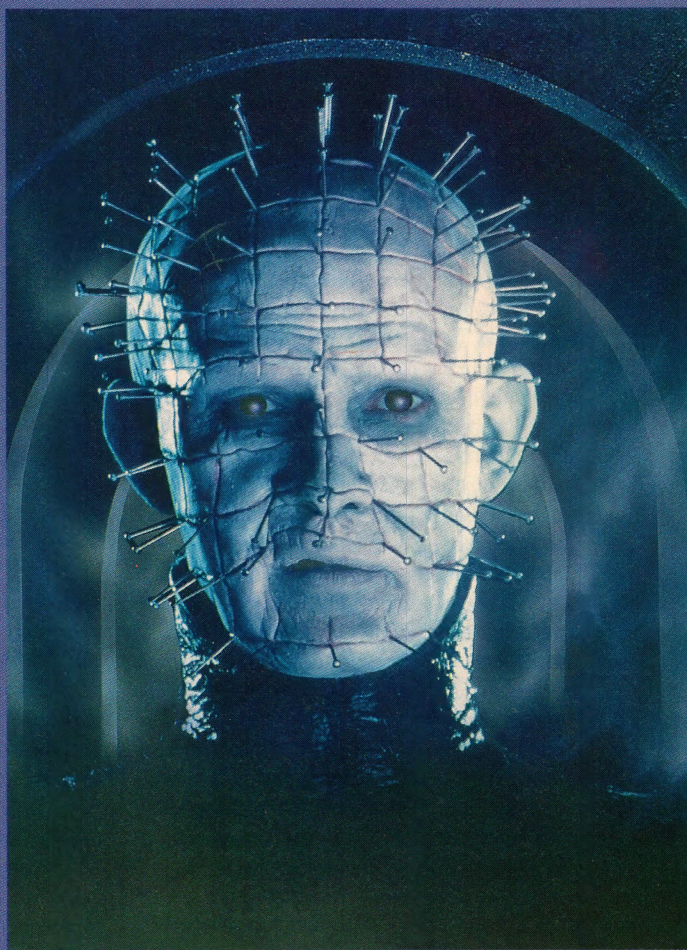
"When the Dog Company came to an end in 1982, he started working on one or two horror sto-

in the best tradition of movie stories - not in Mayfair but Crouch End, and said he was trying to get a movie project together and would I be interested?"

While with the Dog Company, Bradley starred in a couple of stage chillers as the twisted doctor in *Frankenstein in Love* and as Satan himself in *The History of the Devil*. But the wily Cenobite who tries to get his hooks into the innocent Kirsty when she unwittingly opens the gateway to Hell, was quite unlike any other role he could have played.

His first task was to buy a copy of *The Hellbound Heart* - the Barker novella on which the first movie was based: "I re-read it after someone said the original Pinhead was a woman! Actually the similarities are very close, except each pin had a jewel in the end and all the hooks round his neck had bells on them all the way down. He's described as having a light, breathy voice like a young girl's - which isn't a voice that everyone's familiar with outside the movies."

Barker's anti-hero was only sketchily drawn in the book, and the author himself was not a great help at first in providing Doug with tips on how to get to grips with this strange character: "I went to Clive worried, saying 'Give me a clue about him.' He was magnificent and irritating at the same time, because he has a wonderful imagination



and Holland. His name was Clive Barker.

"My association with Clive stretches over 20 years. We used to go and see horror movies together and analyse them in fine

ries he thought he might be able to make some money out of - which was the first stage of the *Books of Blood*. I was working as a jobbing actor when he approached me at a party -

Hell's-a-



pop-Pin!

but it's difficult to lock down. He told me he thought of him as a cross between an administrator and a surgeon who's responsible for running a hospital where there are no wards, only operating theatres. As well as being the man who wields the knife, he's the man who has to keep the timetable going. Armed with that I went back to the script and said 'But how do I play him?'

The answer only came after the grotesque make-up was put on. Like the other Cenobites, Pinhead at one time had been human, but unlike the others, he could remember something of his former life:

"When I stared at myself in the mirror, I decided there was a

tremendous sense of melancholy, loss, and sadness, part of which ties up with the line in *Hellbound*: 'We have no more surprises.' That, for me is the quintessential description of Hell, because life without surprises would be Hell for me.

"I felt that part of what he was mourning was the loss of his own humanity which he could no longer remember but was there inside still. This worked perfectly for *Hellbound* where he remembers his humanity, but the idea got rather lost in the chaotic last 15 minutes of the film in which a thousand storylines were being resolved."

Hellraiser 2: Hellbound picks up precisely where the first one ends, concentrating on Kirsty's attempts

to go into hell to rescue her father. But there she confronts Pinhead and his cohorts and the evil Dr. Channard, who has a warped desire for immortality. Although the effects were as spectacular as Episode One, both critics and fans were negatively critical of the follow-up.

Doug was sympathetic to their protests: "The fans always made it clear that what they wanted at the end was the grand confrontation between Pinhead (the established Lord of Hell, and Dr. Channard, the pretender to the throne. The fans were incensed that I gave up so easily, but that's what the script said. However, the main problem on that film was a sudden loss of funds.

"Originally there were two extra establishing scenes with Elliot - the first one saw him tracking down the box and bartering for it, and the second getting back to the Nissen hut, solving the puzzle, and becoming Pinhead. All the remaining shots of Kirsty running down corridors are all that was left in the budget for the demonic labyrinth."

Despite the disappointment of *Part Two*, the plans for *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth* were laid at a very early stage: "It was always intended to make 3 straight after 2. The delay in making 3 (5 years) was due to the demise of New World and an awful lot of tedious Los Angeles politicking. It was a long haul to get the finance together again, and even when we did, I felt it was touch and go."

In 3, which is released this month on the High Fliers label, Pinhead really comes into his own. Initially imprisoned within an art nouveau sculpture, he's freed when he's unexpectedly brought in contact with blood, and thus begins an orgy of torture and violence that is opposed only by a young TV reporter (Terry Farrell). Even she cannot summon all the the

powers needed to defeat him, and it's left to a figure from Pinhead's past to halt his murderous rampage.

This is the first time Doug has had top billing, and not only is it richly deserved but it served to earn him a prestigious place in the *Fangoria* Hall of Fame, ahead of horror director Dario Argento. So just what is it about Pinhead that gives him such charisma to movie-



goers and makes him (to Doug's disgust) Japan's number one pin-up after Madonna?

"He's such a contradiction, because there is this sense of beauty and the aesthetic about him. But then it suddenly hits you that what you're witness-

ing here is a guy with a lot of nails banged into his head! Everybody of course goes "wow" when they see the make-up, and there's also the sexual ambiguity of the apron-cum-skirt which he wears, which suggests the martial feeling of a samurai costume. The costume also gives him regal bearing and a sense of self-awareness. He's very aware of the games he's playing and how he's



playing them. He's a bit like a game-show host.

"Then he opens his mouth and speaks in this sub-Shakespearian, post-Wildean series of statements. There's an intelligent mind at work here that values the well-chosen phrase. He's not just going

'Die, bitch!'

"When I did the first *Hellraiser*, I enjoyed playing another monster just as I had in the past, but as time went by I thought of Pinhead as less of a monster than Julia and Frank. Pinhead, I realised, was more of an impartial judge, a referee, playing only by the rules. He comments at one point that 'It's not the act (i.e., opening the box) but the intention behind the act that I'm interested in' - hence his different attitudes to Kirsty and Channard."

It seems to be generally acknowledged now that *Hellraiser III* is at least as entertaining and terrifying as the first film, which is unusual for most sequels. Inevitably, the question arose about further chapters in the Pinhead saga...

"We have a potential contract to do three more. *Hellraiser 4* is already on the launching pad, with Clive back on board as executive producer and Bob Keen doing the special effects once more. The intention is to have that one completed by the end of the year.

"At this stage I'm still enjoying the role, so I have no problem about doing further sequels. We managed to get to the third film without losing the integrity of the first, and that's very unusual.

"It didn't work for *Halloween* or *Friday 13th* or the *Nightmare on Elm Street* films. If I know Clive, he'll come up with something completely off the wall for the next one, which will make people sit up and take notice."

Doug dismisses as laughable that he has become exceedingly rich because of the *Hellraiser* movies: "The combined budget for the three movies was \$10 million, so no one's getting rich but the f***ing producers," he adds with a rueful smile.

All this may change now, as Doug's deal for the next few movies should ensure his prickly protege



stays centre stage. Whether or not he will ever be able to break free of his creation (his only other screen appearance was as the leader of the Underworld freaks in Barker's *Nightbreed*) is in some doubt, and he confesses (as he spears the last piece of pizza) that it has already developed into a love-hate relationship.

"Pinhead has become the star of the show. You can't really return him to the shadows. But while I admire his wit immensely, otherwise I think he's a thoroughly miserable beast with no enviable characteristics whatsoever".

Careful Doug, I think the sombre Cenobite just overheard you...



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At something like fifty quid a time, tapes of this fab movie aren't exactly available for pin money. But thanks to our mates at High Fliers we have ten of them to give away, and you'll be Barkering up the right tree to nail yourself one if you can tell us the name of the famous horror director who starred alongside Doug Bradley in *Nightbreed*. Answers on a postcard please, to Hellcomp, Video World, Northern and Shell Tower, 4 Selsden Way, PO Box 381, City Harbour, London E14 9GL.